



eco-cha
TEA CLUB
Fo Shou Oolong Tea

Harvest: Hand-picked
Season: Spring 2018

Region: Pinglin, Taiwan
Elevation: 500m

Oxidation: Heavy
Roast: Heavy


Flavor: *Caramelized aroma. Bold mineral and dried fruit character. Notes of candied yams and bourbon. Dry, never ending finish of wet stone and flowers.*

BREWING GUIDE:

 6g

 300ml

 95°C

 3 minutes

GARDEN

This batch of tea was made by our source of Tie Guan Yin Oolong in Muzha, Taipei. He procures very small batches of fresh leaves from the nearby Pinglin region, and processes them similarly to his traditional Tie Guan Yin Oolong. Fo Shou is a large leaf cultivar from mainland China that is very rare in Taiwan. It offers a bold character of tea with distinctly traditional Oolong flavor notes.

TASTING NOTES

Fo Shou, or Buddha Hand, is a traditionally made Oolong Tea with deep roots — literally. This name refers to a large-leaf strain of tea, putting in the same category as Wild Tea, Assam, and Red Jade #18. Large-leaf strains are a category that is distinctly separate from the majority of small-leaf tea strains cultivated for Chinese Oolong, Green and Black Tea production.

This batch of Fo Shou leaves, harvested last spring, were processed using Taiwanese traditional tea making methods — basically in the fashion of

Muzha Tie Guan Yin Oolong. The large-leaf type leaves need special treatment to coax them into the extensive stages of oxidation that are prerequisite to producing this character of tea. The leaves are then tightly rolled, like most Taiwanese Oolongs. This is followed by repeated roastings to both mellow and enhance the flavor profile. After completion, this batch of tea leaves was allowed to settle for about six months, non- vacuum sealed. All of this spells proper curing of a traditional Oolong Tea.

The character of this tea is rich, and like the soil it grows from — it has a mineral base, with subtle smoky, sweet, fruity, and even floral notes that linger for a long pleasant while. The recommended ratio of leaves to water is less than the norm, around 1:22. So about 7g/150ml tea:water when brewing Gong Fu style, perhaps 5g/300ml for Grandpa style.

This month marks the 3rd anniversary of the Eco-Cha Tea Club, and this is the very first batch of Fo Shou that we've shared. We feel that it couldn't get much more appropriate, in the sense



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that our Tea Club is about sourcing and sharing batches of tea that represent Taiwan's Tea Culture at the micro, singular batch level. In other words, this is a batch of tea that we ourselves have never had the pleasure of sharing, and this in itself is cause for elation!

We also have thoroughly enjoyed this tea every time we've brewed it in recent weeks, from Gong Fu style to French press, to Grandpa style. It's a solid brew with a character that appeals to the tea geek contingent. In other words, it's a distinctive tea with substance and complexity. It may take some attention to get the optimal brew, but even when you miss the mark, it's still very satisfying in the highland single malt whisky genre of quality.

THE STORY OF THIS TEA

This month, we are celebrating the third anniversary of the Eco-Cha Tea Club by sharing a batch of Fo Shou Oolong Tea for the very first time. The Chinese Fo Shou (佛手) means Buddha Hand. The name refers to the tea plant, or cultivar, which classifies as a large leaf type. This

puts it in the category of Assam, and wild strains of tea, along with the Taiwanese hybrid cultivar — Red Jade #18. Despite the fact that virtually all large leaf type strains of tea are cultivated for Black Tea production in Taiwan, Fo Shou has found its unique niche in the making of (partially oxidized) Oolong Tea. Similar to its predecessor in mainland China, this batch of Fo Shou was made in the fashion of traditionally made Tie Guan Yin from Mu Zha, Taiwan.

Mr. Zhang showed us his newly planted crop of Fo Shou a few years ago. Zhang employs natural farming methods on his own, very small plots of tea that include strains of Tie Guan Yin, Jin Xuan, and Fo Shou tea plants. He also outsources produce from tea farmers in the Pinglin tea growing region further north of Taipei, which is where this batch of Fo Shou Tea was grown. He processes these outsourced leaves in his own very small factory in Muzha, embodying his own local heritage as a traditional artisan of Tie Guan Yin Oolong Tea.

Mr. Zhang procured a small amount of leaves from last spring's harvest that



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made 20+ kg of finished product in total. Since this traditionally made tea is well-oxidized and roasted repeatedly, it's quality improves with several months of "rest". He wisely let it do so. We tasted it when it was freshly made, and it was "interestingly intense". Then, when we tasted it again in late September, it was an exemplary descendant of a traditionally made Oolong from mainland China. We feel it is a true rarity that represents Taiwanese tea making expertise as well as deep historical roots in the Oolong tradition from the mainland.